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ABSTRACT

Based on 18 months of extensive research and study, the New Mexico State Department of Education developed the Staff Accountability Plan to address the issue of teacher accountability and certification. One of the provisions of the plan (a written assessment of general and professional knowledge for initial certification) will be fulfilled by using the National Teacher Examinations (NTE). Validation of the Core Battery has been completed with passing scores for the three parts of the Core Battery having been determined by the State Board of Education. The process of validating 21 area examinations is presently underway. Educational Testing Service's basic validation process was utilized with one exception. In addition to the Content Review Panels and Knowledge Estimation Panels, New Mexico required the inclusion of a Content Relevance Panel consisting of K-12 classroom teachers who were asked to provide their professional judgment on the relevance of test content to the classroom setting. The social and political implications of utilizing the NTE in a state with a high percentage of Hispanic and Native American residents are also discussed here. (Author/BW)

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VALIDATING THE NTE FOR THE INITIAL CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN NEW MEXICO...AND BEYOND

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Abstract: Based on 18 months of extensive research and study, the New Mexico State Department of Education developed the Staff Accountability Plan to address the issue of teacher accountability and certification. The three provisions of the Plan address: a written basic skills assessment for admission to teacher training programs; a written assessment of general and professional knowledge for initial certification; and an integrated program of on-the-job performance evaluation utilizing criteria of effective teaching and staff development activities. The National Teacher Examinations were selected to fulfill the requirements of the second provision. Validation of the Core Battery has been completed with passing scores for the three parts of the Core Battery having been determined by the State Board of Education effective July 1, 1984. The process of validating 21 area examinations for use July 1, 1984, is presently underway. Educational Testing Service's basic validation process was utilized with one exception. In addition to the Content Review Panels and Knowledge Estimation Panels, New Mexico required the inclusion of a Content Relevance Panel consisting of K-12 classroom teachers who were asked to provide their professional judgement on the relevance of test content to the classroom setting. ETS has since incorporated this panel into the validation process. Other topics which will be addressed include the social and political implications of utilizing the NTE in a state with a high percentage of Hispanic and Native American residents. The requirements of the second provision are an integral part of the New Mexico Plan which emphasizes the shared responsibility each professional educator and educational organization must assume to assure quality instruction.

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VALIDATING THE NTE FOR THE INITIAL CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN NEW MEXICO...AND BEYOND

The Validation Study

Based on 18 months of extensive research and study, the New Mexico State Department of Education developed the Staff Accountability Plan to address the issue of teacher and administrator accountability and certification in the instructional process. The Plan consists of three provisions: passing a written examination in reading, writing, and math prior to completion of the teacher preparation program; a written assessment of general, professional, and specific content knowledge for initial certification; and an integrated program of on-the-job performance evaluation utilizing criteria of effective teaching and administration as well as staff development activities. After adoption by the State Board of Education on November 9, 1981, the State Department of Education began work simultaneously on the various provisions. This paper will address specifically Provision II, the written assessment of knowledge for initial certification purposes.

Two approaches were considered for meeting the requirements of the second provision. The possibility of in-state development and validation of examinations was investigated. The other

alternative was to utilize existing tests and conduct data collection activities to validate such tests for use in New Mexico. Since the costs associated with in-state development and validation can be great and available resources were limited, a decision to proceed with validating existing instruments was made. The most obvious, if not the only, choice of instruments available was the NTE Core Battery and Specialty Area Tests. A contract between Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the State Department of Education (SDE) was negotiated in which ETS assumed primary responsibility for conducting validation activities associated with the new NTE Core Battery during the Spring of 1983.

The established ETS procedure was utilized to: 1) determine the relationship of the content of the NTE Core Battery to the content of general education and teacher preparation programs in New Mexico (Content Review Panels) and 2) assess the level of performance on the NTE tests expected of a candidate possessing the minimum amount of knowledge necessary to complete an approved teacher preparation program and enter a classroom to teach (Knowledge Estimation Panels). Additionally, New Mexico required ETS to collect data on a third objective - the relevance of content and skills tested by the NTE Core Battery to the classroom situation (Job Relevance Panels). ETS has since incorporated this panel into its standard validation process.

The validation study was carried out in three phases under the coordinated efforts of the State Department of Education and ETS. During Phase I, data collection procedures were developed

and necessary arrangements were made to identify and assemble panels of professional educators to make judgements necessary to quantify the relationships being examined. During Phase II, the three panels met and the necessary data were collected. During Phase III, the data were analyzed and a final report was prepared and submitted to the State Department of Education. The study was conducted during the months of November, 1982, through June, 1983.

Beginning with the standard ETS validation procedure, the State Department of Education sponsored a meeting for the Deans of the Colleges of Education and School District Superintendents or their representatives to explain the purpose and content of the study and to distribute assignments for selecting panel members. In retrospect, and since hindsight is an exact science, the most appropriate level to begin with was not the Deans of the Colleges of Education but rather the Presidents of the various institutions or at least the chief academic officers. This realization occurred when the Deans of the Colleges of Education appropriately announced they were not qualified to recommend faculty members in areas other than education. Since several parts of the Core Battery, e.g., Fine Arts, require judgements made by professionals in other colleges, it is now strongly recommended that the validation process begin by soliciting the support of the uppermost echelons of the institutions' administrators.

In direct reference to the major objectives, the three different panels - Content Review, Knowledge Estimation, and

Job Relevance - were used in the study. The panel members nominated for Content Review and Knowledge Estimation Panels had to meet the following objectives: a) designation of members with the requisite expert qualifications; b) fair representation of the colleges and universities in New Mexico that offer undergraduate teacher training programs; and c) fair representation of the faculties at colleges with significant ethnic minorities. For the Job Relevance Panel, the objective was a fair representation of teachers from the school districts in New Mexico.

The Content Review panelists, consisting of New Mexico college and university faculty members, evaluated the content of the tests (at the individual question level and test level) in relation to the content of teacher preparation curriculum in New Mexico. The evaluation of the content appropriateness of the tests was based on four criteria. In order to be judged "very closely related" a test had to meet all four of the following criteria:

1. Ninety percent of the questions had to be judged content appropriate;
2. more than 50% of the panel members had to indicate that a test either paralleled the curriculum very closely or did not differ appreciably from it;
3. the Index of Difference in Relative Emphasis which measures the relationship between the emphasis placed on content category in the test and the emphasis placed on that category in the curriculum had to be below 40; and

4. topic areas cited as omitted from the test could not be mentioned by more than one panel member.

If these four very stringent criteria were not met, the test was judged to be either "closely related," "reasonably related," or "probably related" in proportion to the number and criteria met. The findings of the Content Review Panelists for the three Core Battery Tests were as follows:

1. The Test of Professional Knowledge was judged to be "closely related" to the curriculum of the teacher training programs.
2. The Test of General Knowledge was judged to be "closely related" to the curriculum of the teacher training programs.
3. The Test of Communication Skills was judged to be "closely related" to the curriculum of the teacher training programs.

The Job Relevance Panel evaluated the relevance of the tests to the job of beginning teachers. The panel consisted of teachers from various school districts in New Mexico. The evaluation of the job relevance of a given test was based on a single criterion: 90% of the test had to be judged job relevant by the panel members in order for the test to be judged "very relevant." Judgements of "relevant," "reasonably relevant," and "probably relevant" were assigned in direct proportion to the percentage of questions judged to be job relevant in tests that did not meet this stringent criterion. The results of the professional judgements made by the Job Relevance Panelists

were as follows:

1. The Test of Professional Knowledge was judged to be "reasonably relevant" to the job of the beginning teacher.
2. The Test of General Knowledge was judged to be "very relevant" to the job of the beginning teacher with the exception of the Literature and Fine Arts sections which were judged to be "reasonably relevant."
3. The Test of Communication Skills was judged to be "very relevant" to the job of the beginning teacher.

The Knowledge Estimation Panel of New Mexico college and university faculty members estimated the percentages of minimally knowledgeable students (teacher certification applicants) who would know the answers to individual questions. A separate panel reviewed the Essay section of the Test of Communication Skills to determine its appropriateness and relevance and to estimate the score that a minimally qualified candidate would receive. Utilizing the questions that were judged content appropriate and job relevant, passing scores incorporating the judgements of the Knowledge Estimation Panel and the standard error of measurement were determined.

The following scores, on a scale from 600 to 690, were presented and approved by the New Mexico State Board of Education:

Test of Professional Knowledge 630

Test of General Knowledge. 645

Test of Communication Skills 644

New Mexico has a tri-cultural population with aspects of

the Anglo, Hispanic, and Native American cultures being intermingled on a daily basis. Because of the unique attributes each culture maintains, it was the State Department's desire to obtain information on any items which might appear to be biased or offensive to any group in the state. In order to accomplish this objective, representatives from each group were asked to review the tests and note any items which in their professional opinion they believed might be biased against a particular group of New Mexico citizens.

A group of 49 college faculty and public school teachers served as sensitivity reviewers of the Core Battery Tests. Six reviewers singled out four of the 175 questions on the Test of Professional Knowledge which they felt to be problematic because the behavior described or analyzed in the questions did not take into account the role played by the family and community in the lives of Native Americans or Hispanics. After studying the four questions, although the correct answers described behaviors that might not be consonant with Hispanic or Native American cultural attitudes, the sensitivity reviewers' comments made clear that the intended correct answers did not controvert those attitudes or values. On the Test of General Knowledge which contained 194 questions, no particular items were cited as being culturally biased although general comments were made regarding a noticeable absence of references to Hispanics and Native American history and art. Upon review, this was found to be a legitimate observation on the Social Studies portion of the examination, however, there were items specific to the

Southwest or Hispanic material in the Literature and Fine Arts component. None of the 207 questions on the Test of Communication Skills were listed as being culturally sensitive.

Presently, the State Department of Education is in the process of conducting validation work on 21 Specialty Area Examinations of the NTE which are to be adopted by the State Board of Education for implementation beginning July 1, 1984. The activities associated with the validation of the area examinations are primarily being conducted by the SDE and follow the procedures which have previously been described and are considered to be standard. The involvement of ETS is primarily to provide the necessary written material, be present when restricted materials are being reviewed, scan the data collection sheets, and produce the tables necessary for making decisions regarding content relevance, job relevance, and passing scores.

Beyond the Validation Study

While the validation work on the NTE examinations is often long and tedious, it may, in fact, be the easiest task associated with a teacher and administrator testing program. In the process of implementing the use of the NTE for initial certification in New Mexico, various problem areas involving the developers and producers of the test, ETS, have been encountered. One such problem involves the national administration dates.

Due to the lateness in the calendar year (October, November) of the nationally scheduled administrations of the NTE,

New Mexico, and apparently some other states, encounter problems certifying recently hired teachers. New Mexico statutes require that all teachers meet certification standards by the end of the first three months of the school year or forfeit all claims to compensation. Notification of the test results are received after the three-month time limit and present problems for individuals, especially those new to the state, who have been hired during the summer. A request was made that earlier test administrations in the fall and a need for additional test dates be discussed at the Fall, 1983, meeting of the NTE Policy Council. These issues were not on the agenda apparently due to lack of time. According to authorities at ETS, future plans do call for adding summer testing dates but presumably because the topic was not addressed at the Fall, 1983, NTE Policy Council Meeting, this addition cannot be made until the Summer of 1986. In the interim, special administrations of the NTE can offer some relief but they are an additional burden on the institutions conducting the testing. Further, since there are insufficient national administrations of the tests to meet state and local needs, the additional fees collected by ETS for this service are hardly acceptable. Some progress can be noted here in that all or some special administration fees can now be waived.

Another problem area involves the number of specialty area examinations a candidate can presently take during the course of a year, which is two. Many, if not most, of the New Mexico applicants for certification are seeking credentials in more

than one area; their needs presently cannot be met within a reasonable time element. Again this is particularly unmanageable for new teachers hired at the beginning of the school year. In addition to increasing the number of national administrations, another possible solution is to provide the opportunity to take one specialty area test in the morning and one test in the afternoon or offering one portion of the Core Battery in the morning and one specialty area test in the afternoon and then a Saturday for specialty area testing only.

A third problem area centers around the analysis of test results. There is a need for agencies and institutions to be able to analyze test scores as their needs dictate. To this end, cost information for a computer tape containing a file on each candidate reporting their scores in New Mexico was requested of ETS. The price quote of several thousand dollars compared to similar tapes produced by other testing companies for slightly over a hundred dollars was far too high. The need for states and institutions of higher education to be able to run frequency distributions and program analyses to provide information on the strengths and weaknesses of various groupings is a need which must be addressed in a reasonable manner by ETS and the NTE program.

In closing, this paper has presented an over view of the validation work on the NTE examinations for use in New Mexico. The process is not dissimilar to that used in other parts of the

country. Beyond the validation tasks there are areas which will require creativity, flexibility, and resourcefulness on the part of Educational Testing Service to meet state and local needs. Hopefully, the common concerns and problems held by various organizations utilizing the NTE throughout the country will encourage the timely resolution of various areas of difficulty.